

# Calls for accelerated job creation in Africa

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast - Africa has to provide employment opportunities for its youth if it is to harness their potential and contribute to the desired economic growth outlined in the vision of Agenda 2063.



PIDA Week

The call was made by officials from the African Union (AU), the NEPAD Agency and the African Development Bank (AfDB), at the opening of the second annual Programme for Infrastructure Development (PIDA) Week underway last week in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. This year's gathering organised under the theme, 'Creating Jobs through Regional Infrastructure Development', has drawn over 250 participants and stakeholders representing Member States, private sector, development partners and project owners.

PIDA, a multi-sectoral programme, covers transport, energy, transboundary water and ICT, is dedicated to facilitate continental integration in Africa through improved regional infrastructure.

PIDA week 2016 will showcase and validate the relevance of regional infrastructure (PIDA) projects and the impact thereof on the socio-economic development of Africa and particularly on job creation for the youth.

In her statement, Dr Elham M.A. Ibrahim, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, said, "PIDA should play an important role in narrowing the gap between job creation and unemployment. To that end, public decision-makers and private sector management are urged to actively undertake training and skills acquisition in infrastructure development,

particularly in building roads, rail systems, power generation and power transmission systems in order to enable young Africans to be well prepared for the implementation of complex programmes such as PIDA.”

The week’s events intended to build on the achievement of the inaugural event held in 2015 to increase the visibility of PIDA projects, reach out to the global infrastructure investor community, development finance institutions, export credit agencies, project sponsors (public and private) and governments.

NEPAD Agency CEO, Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki underscored that if Africa is to be successful in increasing the number of regional and domestic infrastructure projects and their impact, changes are needed in mind-set, policy pronouncements and programme implementation. He indicated that there is a need to continue with the positive streamlining of trans-boundary infrastructure projects as highlighted in PIDA and complementary initiatives.

“Africa stands to benefit from its critical human resources, the young people, who must be nurtured to enable their meaningful participation in national development efforts and I believe that infrastructure development is central to this,” said Dr Mayaki.

In his address, AfDB acting vice president Stephan Nalletamby, outlined, “PIDA’s continued importance for Africa’s transformation and insisted that the programme was “solid, sustainable and attainable objectives for 2030”.

“We have selected our destination and we are going to get there, as long as we can be assured of excellence in our infrastructure and total reliability in its implementation and operation on the ground. The PIDA programme is at the front of our thinking. We consider it to be critical for Africa’s integration agenda,” Nalletamby told participants. “PIDA has the unique feature of being the first African infrastructure development agenda, designed by Africans and fully owned and endorsed at the highest level by African Heads of State and Government. So it has to succeed,” he concluded.

PIDA Week 2016 also focused on reporting key achievements. The PIDA Progress Report 2016, shared after the opening ceremony, highlighted the need to de-risk infrastructure and PIDA projects to solicit interest from private sector investors as well as domestic and international investors. The Continental Business Network, CBN, has provided the platform to engage private sectors stakeholders. The 2016 report also give an overview of progress made with the 16 priority PIDA projects agreed upon at the 2014 Dakar Financing Summit.

In addition to progress and successes, the report presents a candid review of the challenges and lessons learnt to ensure continued accelerated implementation of PIDA projects.

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